

## OAKSTERDAM UNIVERSITY: LESSON PLAN

### WORKING WITH YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT 101 – Chuck Ream, 9/5/09

YOU CAN INFLUENCE ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT FROM WHERE YOU LIVE!

#### I) INTRODUCTION

a) Why be politically active?

b) Why right now?

c) Why should Medical patients and caregivers be politically active?

d) Who are you in this lifetime? Are you an actor – or merely one who is acted upon?

a) Because we are suffering under an absolutely absurd and un-American inquisition against people who love nature's most useful miracle plant – in the "land of the free and the home of the brave". (this week's story, children stolen, re-united by cannabis.) Now we have the momentum to win this long struggle; we can get to "tax and regulate" ("legalization").

b) Opinions are changing. We have huge momentum in these difficult economic times. If we act forcefully and competently right now we can turn this historic corner and win total victory.

c) Only patients and caregivers are "legal", and should now be able to publically speak out without fear of law enforcement. Cannabis activists fought for our medical rights, it is up to us to help finish the job. As Dr. Lester Grinspoon says, the full medical benefits of cannabis cannot be realized until it is legal.

d) "All the world's a stage". You are a player only if you act. You can make a difference. When you help to change history for the better you know your life has meaning. You may be exhausted at the end of a political campaign, but there is nothing that gets you higher than political victory.

#### II) CANNABIS LAW REFORM - OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL POLITICAL WORK

A) To protect every part of our new Michigan Medical Marijuana Act.

B) To protect our people – when one of our friends or colleagues is arrested or taken to jail we must not rest until they are out. (hold protest demonstrations, write letters, respectfully attend all court proceedings as a group. If you protect others then they will be there to protect you).

C) To extend our Michigan Marijuana law so that we can have legal dispensaries where patients can get their herbal medications.

- D) To end the atrocity of Marijuana prohibition by taxing and regulating cannabis like we do alcohol.
- E) To make local governments to do good things. To stop local government from doing bad things.

### **III) BE THE "WATCHDOG" OF YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, MEDIA, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Go to your local government meetings, even their work sessions. Make friends, and make it clear what your issue is. Tell them you are considering a run for office yourself. Write letters and make calls to local media when an important issue comes up.

When you know your local politics you will be among the first to know when a good or a bad policy is being hatched. Immediately try to "lobby" with you best contacts in City government. Use your contacts in local media to get the facts out ("framed" the way you choose; with your own "spin" on it.) Praise local officials for steps forward and make sure they are implemented. Condemn them for oppressive or restrictive plans. Get bad ideas changed before they are even enacted.

Nowadays you can check all agendas and minutes of local governments on the web, so you can keep track of what is happening and attend the meetings that are most important.

Dale comment, "It takes a special kind of OCD to keep close track of local Government"

Don't be shy. Publicize the facts you unearth. RUN FOR LOCAL POLITICAL OFFICE – OR FIND GOOD CANDIDATES AND HELP GET THEM ELECTED! You can do it! I was elected to 5 four year terms in local township government. If you are going to the meetings anyway it is much effective (and fun) if you have a vote.

### **IV) FORCE GOOD CHANGES WITHIN A MICHIGAN CITY**

If you live in a County or a Township you have no electoral mechanism other than voting to force a change that you want.

Michigan CITIES, however, are governed by "The Home Rule City Act", which gives local citizens of CITIES the right to change a city ordinance or revise City Charter through an initiative and referendum process. If you get enough signatures on a properly written petition the city has no choice but to adopt your proposed changes or put them on the ballot.

Step 1 - Review (google) the Michigan Home Rule City Act; study section 117.21 through 117.25

Step 2 – Review the a) City Charter and b) City Ordinances. Follow all directions and make sure your new ordinance or Charter revision language fits perfectly into the current city charter or ordinance book. Have your work checked by an attorney who knows election law.

We used this process to get the 5 local victories which led up to our new statewide Medical Marijuana law.

Examples (hold up signs) 1) Ann Arbor Medical Marijuana, 2) Traverse City Medical Marijuana, (done as a "LEEP", or "Lowest Law Enforcement Priority" ordinance). We also passed Detroit, Ferndale, and Flint.

V) **KILL BAD DECISIONS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT.**

Most major new local government initiatives require funds, and to get new tax money often requires a vote. IT IS VERY EASY TO KILL ANY NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM THAT REQUIRES NEW TAXES. For instance, what if your town wanted to build a huge new jail – to house people like you and your friends. You can organize a small group (if possible), get your views out to the media, put up lots of well made signs and kill it. JUST SAY NO!

If your local city passes an **ordinance** you don't like, such as a restriction on Medical Marijuana, you can **force it to be put before a vote of the people through the initiative and referendum process** (which is outlined in your city charter, which is on the web).

Story of Washtenaw County "No Giant Jail" and "Save our Sheriff's Department" campaigns, show signs. Politics sometimes creates strange "bedfellows". Observer article

VI) **USE DIRECT ACTION – "TAKE TO THE STREETS".**

**Maximize publicity** about the issue and the demonstration you will be holding (at City Hall, the Jail, the newspaper, etc). Local officeholders and elected judges pay very close attention to what they read in the paper and to public opinion. A well publicized demonstration with a clear message can have much more power than you think. You only need **4 people with good signs** to have a good demonstration. Four people, with good signs and good publicity to the media, can be more effective than having 400 people with no publicity. Make your own video of the event and post it where you can.

EXAMPLES a)Gersh – self defense, b)Derek Copp- stop shooting students,c) the "74%" demonstration following Hash Bash –demand to implement Medical Marijuana in Ann Arbor.

VII) **WHAT IS NEXT IN MICHIGAN POLITICALLY, HOW DO WE GET TOTAL VICTORY?**

Local Michigan activists won victories for Medical Marijuana in 5 Michigan cities; and now we have Medical Marijuana statewide.

In the Nov. 2010 election local Michigan activists plan to win Lowest Law Enforcement Priority (LEEP) initiatives in 5 Michigan cities on the same day (to "pave the way" for "tax and regulate" (legalization). Cities under consideration so far include Flint, Mt. Pleasant, Kalamazoo, Ypsilanti, and Ferndale.

An "LLEP" mandates that a city shall make "possession or use on private property of up to 1.1 ounces of Marijuana by adults the lowest law enforcement priority of the city". Winning a LLEP

proves that the taxpayers of the city don't want their money spent to chase potheads – they want it spent to protect them and to find real criminals. It is only a tiny conceptual jump from "Lowest Law Enforcement Priority" to "Tax and Regulate".

Michigan activists are again going to take the lead. If you live near one of these cities I mentioned please join us in the struggle for total victory. Possibly we will find volunteers from our local statewide "compassion clubs". If you have any money to donate to help us pay petitioners please let me know. If you actually live within the city limits of one of these 5 cities please let me know. You might be incredibly valuable, since most of these cities will only allow registered voter who live within their city to gather petition signatures. Contact me at the Safer Michigan Coalition, using my personal e-mail address listed below.

#### **VIII ) YOU CAN INFLUENCE STATE AND NATIONAL POLITICS FROM YOUR BASE IN A LOCAL COMMUNITY.**

- 1) Know your Michigan State Senator and Representative. Write to them. Be polite but make your opinion very clear. Tell them that you vote and have a lot of friends.
- 2) Be aware of your local member of the US House of Representatives and the two Senators from Michigan. Meet with your House of Representatives member and call, write, and e-mail all your federal government representatives. The MPP (Marijuana Policy Project) website makes it very easy for you to contact your national legislators.

REMEMBER, YOUR MOST POWERFUL COMMUNICATION IS THROUGH A PERSONAL VISIT OR A PERSONAL "SNAIL MAIL" LETTER. THESE THEY TAKE SERIOUSLY.

NOTE: Government officials care nothing about you unless you are in their district.

#### Possible topics

- a) Defend the Michigan Medical Marijuana Act as it is written.
- b) Amend the law to provide for dispensaries so that patients can get their medicine
- c) End the brutality of cannabis prohibition and create revenue for governments by taxing and regulating marijuana like alcohol.

**YOU CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN LOCAL POLITICS, EVEN BY YOURSELF. LET'S PUSH FORWARD UNTIL TOTAL VICTORY IS OURS.**

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING US IN THE STRUGGLE FOR REAL "AMERICAN VALUES"!**

**WE WILL WIN, AND WE WILL BRING THE MYRIAD BENEFITS OF OUR MIRACLE PLANT TO ALL PEOPLE. If you always refuse to act politically you will never know how much power you could have had to do good.**

**PLEASE FIGHT BACK AGAINST INJUSTICE! WE STILL HAVE MUCH TO WIN, AND, AS CHURCHILL SAID, "WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER!"**

## **CONTACTS FOR MICHIGAN ACTIVISTS**

Safer Michigan Coalition (for LLEP's) contact Chuck Ream at [moksha@umich.com](mailto:moksha@umich.com)

Michigan Medical Marijuana Association, Greg Francisco

Americans for Safe Access of Michigan, Tim Beck

Michigan NORML (Michigan chapter of the National Organization to Reform Marijuana Laws) Rev. Steve Thompson

American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan c/o Shelly Weisburg

Proposed "boxes" for each section.

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### **I) INTRODUCTION**

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### **II) CANNABIS LAW REFORM - OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL POLITICAL WORK**

- a) Defend and protect the Michigan Medical Marijuana Act
- b) Protect our people
- c) Extend our new law; Dispensaries, New Medical conditions

- b) Stay on message
- c) Make great, colorful signs
- d) Don't need many people

**VII) WHAT IS NEXT IN MICHIGAN POLITICALLY,**

**HOW DO WE GET TOTAL VICTORY?**

- a) Lowest Law Enforcement Priority (LEEP) Campaigns
- b) Easy to win
- c) Tiny jump from LLEP to "tax and regulate"
- d) 5 cities, Flint, Mt. Pleasant, Ypsilanti, Kalamazoo, Ferndale

Contact: Safer Michigan Coalition, Chuck Ream, e-mail [moksha@umich.edu](mailto:moksha@umich.edu)

**VIII) YOU CAN INFLUENCE STATE AND NATIONAL POLITICS**

- a) State Representative and Senator
- b) US Representative and Senator
- c) Personal contact and "snail mail"

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